

<b>Place name:</b>	Royston
<b>Address:</b>	17 Combermere Street, Aberfeldie
<b>Place typology:</b>	Residential
<b>Construction date range:</b>	Circa 1909
<b>Architectural style:</b>	Federation Italianate Survival
<b>Assessment:</b>	heritage ALLIANCE, May 2021
<b>Recommendation:</b>	That the place be included in the heritage overlay schedule

**Photo of place:**



17 Combermere Street, Aberfeldie. Source, heritage ALLIANCE, May 2021

## Statement of Significance:

What is significant?

17 Combermere Street, Aberfeldie is a dichromatic Federation Italianate Survival villa built circa 1909. The following elements are significant:

- Dichromatic brick work (red and cream) with decorative quoining to corners and windows; prominent string course and banding; projecting hipped bay.
- Original M-profile hipped slate roof with fish scale patterning and metal ridge capping; under eave brackets; three face brick chimneys with rendered corbelling.
- Part-verandah with striped corrugated iron, cast iron frieze and turned timber posts.
- Two double hung sashes in the bay with segmental arched window head with alternating cream voussoirs.

How is it significant?

17 Combermere Street, Aberfeldie is of local architectural (representative) significance to the City of Moonee Valley.

Why is it significant?

17 Combermere Street, Aberfeldie is significant as a Victorian style villa built in the Federation era. By the late 1890s aspects of the Queen Anne style may appear with those of the Victorian Italianate and the style is referred to as 'Italianate Survival'. These transitional houses display Italianate features and forms blended with new architectural trends of the Federation era. 17 Combermere Street, Aberfeldie is a representative example of this design approach. Victorian era houses are common in parts of Moonee Valley with many examples included on the Heritage Overlay, but there are only a few Italianate Survival styles.

17 Combermere Street, Aberfeldie demonstrates its Italianate Survival style through its asymmetrical form with projecting bay, use of dichromatic brickwork, segmental arched windows and slate roof. 17 Combermere Street, Aberfeldie is of high integrity with very few changes to original elements of the place, that can be sighted from the street. The building retains its original wall and roof forms, verandah, fenestration, and original allotment size. (Criterion D)

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## Description:

17 Combermere Street, Aberfeldie is an asymmetrical free-standing villa with dichromatic brickwork. It is partly obscured by vegetation at the front. Further inspection would provide more details of the construction. It has red face brick walls with cream brick quoining patterning around windows and corners. There is a decorative band of two courses in cream brick across the frontage at mid-window height and a prominent, protruding cream string course. Some of the brickwork appears to be tuckpointed.

The roof is in a hipped M-profile and has a hipped projecting bay to the front. The original slate roof has fish-scale patterns across the street frontage and metal ridge capping. There are timber under-eave brackets above the prominent string course. The three brick chimneys have rendered, corbelled tops. The convex striped corrugated iron part verandah has turned timber posts and a cast-iron frieze.

The two timber double hung sashes in the projecting bay have segmental arched openings with alternate cream and red brick voussoirs. The windows appear to have red rendered sills. The pair of windows under the verandah cannot be seen clearly from the street. The door is also obscured.

The house is set back from the street with dense garden vegetation to the north and side driveway to the south.

## History:

### Contextual History

City of Moonee Valley occupies part of the Traditional lands of the Wurundjeri-willam clan of the Woi-wurrung people. Many sites in the area now known as City of Moonee Valley show evidence of Woi-wurrung activities and spiritual connections. Fish were trapped in the rivers and creeks, stone was quarried from the river edges, murnong daisy was collected and kangaroos hunted across grassland areas, and bark was harvested from trees in the river valleys. This relationship between the Woi-wurrung and the land, water, animals and plants, continues to this day (Living Histories, *Thematic Environmental History*, 2012: p.29).

The first Europeans to explore the area known as Moonee Valley was a surveyor, Charles Grimes in 1803. In 1836, settlers moving from Van Diemen's Land crossed the area in the hope of finding empty, cheap and plentiful land for sheep. By 1842, surveyors had created the first map of the Parish of Doutta Galla and then Woi-wurrung lands were offered for sale by the British Crown to Europeans (noting that the land was never ceded). The Wurundjeri were moved off their land which had a profound impact on their culture, health and language. By 1860, the entire parish was sold (Living Histories, *Thematic Environmental History*, 2012: p.32-33).

Early development of the area began with the goldrush period of the 1850s which saw Mount Alexander Road used as a thoroughfare to the diggings with over 30,000 people estimated as moving along the dirt road each week. Businesses and shops sprang up providing sustenance, transport and accommodation to service the passing gold rush trade. Some very early wayside hotels and shops still survive from this period (Living Histories, *Thematic Environmental History*, 2012: p.51-54).

After the heady days of the goldrush, the 1860s saw Essendon, Ascot Vale, Moonee Ponds and Flemington develop into permanent townships. The development of railways by private companies gave huge impetus to suburban development of the area with the opening of the Essendon railway in 1860. The government purchased the line in 1868. Suburban trains terminated at Essendon and it wasn't until 1889 that Ascot Vale, Moonee Ponds and Newmarket stations were completed. By 1893 stations opened at Strathmore and Pascoe Vale and in 1922 Glenbervie Station opened. The railways provided an enormous boost to residential development along the line and those who had previously moved to areas without trains, now clamoured for them. (Living Histories, *Thematic Environmental History*, 2012: p.59).

By the 1880s Essendon had become a Borough and by 1891 had a population of 14,411. Many subdivisions occurred during the land boom of the 1880s and many failed to eventuate due to the depression of the 1890s. In the interwar period a boom in subdivision and residential infill occurred in Travancore, Essendon, Ascot Vale, Strathmore and Moonee Ponds, which was focused on new transport routes along the tram lines, first established to Essendon in 1905. In 1919 the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board was formed and lines were extended and improved. The tram lines saw development occur either side of Maribyrnong Road, further along Mt Alexander Road, Buckley Street and Keilor Road (Living Histories, *Thematic Environmental History*, 2012: p.65-68; p.115).

In the three decades after the Second World War, Melbourne's suburbs ballooned outward to cater for post-war migration, the baby boom, an increasing need for new housing, and a more car-centred economy. Areas to the north of Essendon had been open paddocks in 1945, but by 1950 the Shire of Keilor found themselves with a developing suburb with no name. It was later called Niddrie. Similarly, Airport West was developing quickly with houses being built before the roads. By 1964 it was claimed that Airport West had the cheapest cream brick veneers in Melbourne (Living Histories, *Thematic Environmental History*, 2012: p.120-121).

Many houses in these post-war areas were austere weatherboard or brick veneer bungalows, with a few scattered architect designed or project homes on new blocks, particularly along the Boulevard in Aberfeldie. These post-war housing areas were car-centred communities located close to industry along Keilor Road, Matthews Avenue around Essendon Airport and East Keilor. By 1960 Airport West had its first hotel, the famous Skyways Hotel and then in the 1970s the first shopping centre, owned by Westfield was begun (heritage ALLIANCE, *Gap Heritage Study*, 2005: p.28-30).

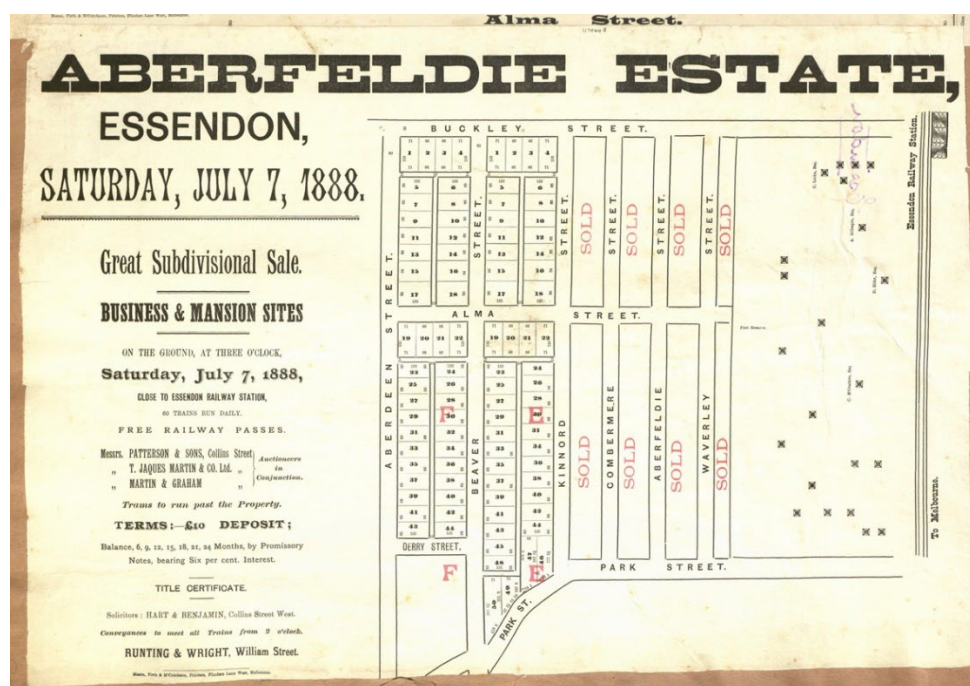
Post-war housing pressure also saw a huge investment by the Housing Commission of Victoria who developed 150 bungalows in concrete, weatherboard and brick in Aberfeldie. They then began an ambitious estate of houses and flats on a 77 acre site at Ascot Vale in 1949. These low-rise walk-up flats eventually gave rise to the high-rise flats of Flemington which opened in June 1965 (Living Histories, *Thematic Environmental History*, 2012: p.123).



Many post-war migrants bought or built houses in the outer areas of the municipality, close to employment and industry and where new, cheaper housing was readily available. These developments and public housing in Aberfeldie, Ascot Vale and Flemington have had a long-lasting effect on the nature of the Moonee Valley community which today is one of the most diverse and vibrant in Melbourne (Living Histories, *Thematic Environmental History*, 2012: p.124).

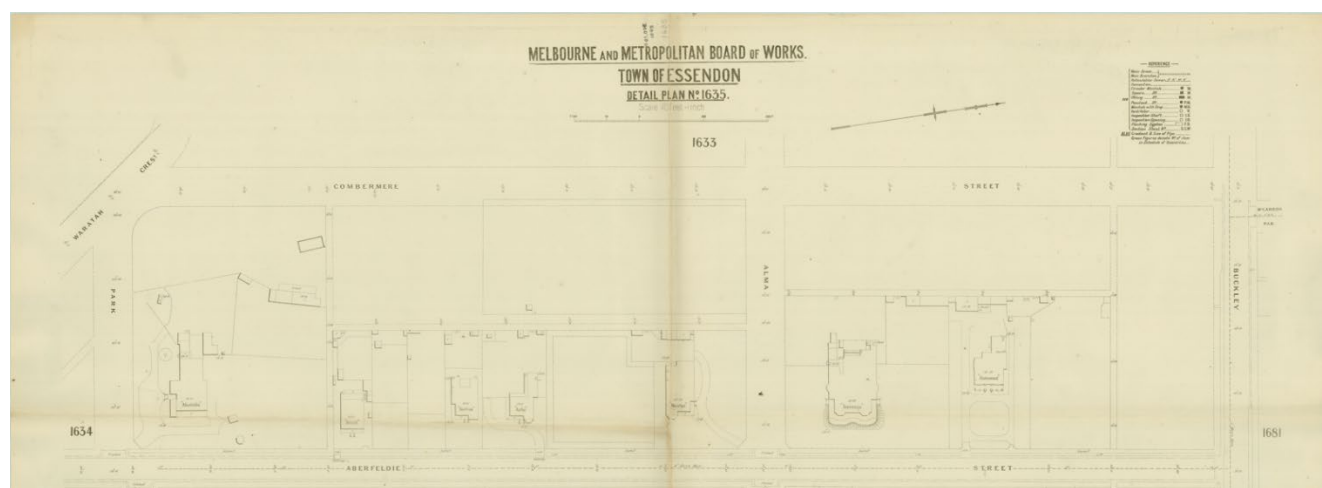
## Place History

17 Combermere Street, Aberfeldie is situated near the eastern corner of Combermere and Alma Streets, to the south of Buckley Street. The subject site was subdivided in 1888 as part of the Aberfeldie Estate auction ("Aberfeldie Estate, 1888," State Library of Victoria).



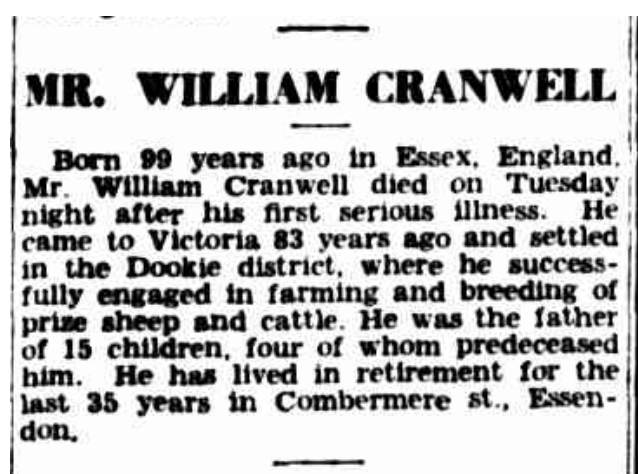
Mason, Firth & McCutcheon, "Aberfeldie Estate, Essendon," 1888, State Library of Victoria.

Constructed for James Robertson Jnr. on land inherited from his father, "Aberfeldie (1866)," was located at the southern end of Combermere, with a frontage to the west (Context, *Moonee Valley Heritage Study*, 2015: p.61). Robertson was a successful grazier and prominent in public affairs at Keilor and Essendon, serving as Justice of the Peace and Essendon Borough Councillor (Context, *Moonee Valley Heritage Study*, 2015: p.61). In 1888, the property was sold to Alex Gillespie on behalf of the Essendon Investment Company, who in turn sold it to land agents Messrs. Runting and Wright who then subdivided it as the Aberfeldie Estate (Context, *Moonee Valley Heritage Study*, 2015: p.61-62; *North Melbourne Advertiser*, 23 June 1888, p. 2). This was one of numerous speculative subdivisions occurring in the late 1880s land boom.



Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works Plan no. 1635, 1905, State Library of Victoria. Royston has not yet been built.

The Aberfeldie Estate contained over 200 allotments with frontages to the newly formed streets of Waverly, Aberfeldie, Kinnord, Beaver, Aberdeen, Park, Alma and Combermere (Context, *Moonee Valley Heritage Study*, 2015: p.61-62; "Aberfeldie Estate, 1888," State Library of Victoria). The subject house was constructed on lots 12 and 14 in section C as shown on the 1888 subdivisional plan ("Aberfeldie Estate, 1888," State Library of Victoria; Probate, Public Record Office Victoria, VPRS 28/P3, 318/129). Robertson's house remained intact on its large allotment between Combermere and Aberfeldie Streets until 1918 (Context, *Moonee Valley Heritage Study*, 2015: p.62). However, development of the area went largely unrealized due to the subsequent economic crash in the early 1890s (Michael Cannon, *The Land Boomers*, 1966: p.21). This is particularly demonstrated along Combermere Street with *Sands & McDougall* listing no houses until 1905 (*Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works Plan no. 1635*, 1906; *Sands & McDougall*, 1905). Those which were constructed, reflected the affluence of the residents. *The Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) Plan* of 1906 shows a number of large villas constructed along Aberfeldie Street, including "Tooronga" and "Homewood," which sat adjacent to the subject site (*MMBW Plan no. 1635*, 1906). In 1913, Essendon council would declare Combermere and surrounding streets "brick areas" in order to prevent "those of moderate means building upon th[e] estate (*The Argus*, 30 Oct 1913, p.10)."



"Mr. William Cranwell," *The Argus*, 10 October 1940, p.5.

17 Combermere Street, Aberfeldie, also known as "Royston," was constructed between 1908 and 1909 for farmer William Cranwell (1841-1940) (Probate, Public Records Office Victoria, VPRS 28/P3, 318/129; Essendon Historical Society Notes). The house was constructed following his marriage in 1908 to Ethel May Green (1884-1948). At the time of its construction, it was only the second house along Combermere Street and the only one on the eastern side (*Sands & McDougall*, 1905; 1910). Cranwell lived at 17 Combermere Street until the age of 99 years, and at the time of his death in 1940, the house was described as being "a six roomed Brick residence in bad state of repair" with a valuation of £800 (*The Age*, 10 Oct 1940, p.1; Probate, Public Records Office Victoria, VPRS 28/P3, 318/129). His son, Robert Cranwell, seems to have inherited the house where Ethel May continued to live up until 1944-45, at which time it was likely sold Probate, Public Records Office Victoria, VPRS 28/P3, 318/129; *Sands & McDougall*, 1944/45).

## Sources:

### Primary Sources

*Aberfeldie Estate*, auction plan, 1888, State Library of Victoria  
*The Age*  
*The Argus*  
*Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works Plans*, State Library of Victoria  
*North Melbourne Advertiser*  
 Probates, Public Record Office Victoria  
*Sands & McDougall Directory*

### Secondary Sources

Context, *Moonee Valley Heritage Study*, 2015

### Thematic Context:

*City of Moonee Valley Thematic Environmental History*, 2012

- 2. Peopling Victoria's places and landscapes
  - 2.7 Promoting settlement
- 6. Building towns, cities and the garden state
  - 6.7 Making houses for Victorians

### Comparative Analysis:

*During the boom years during the 1880s, the City of Moonee Valley saw increased residential development through subdivision of large estates. By the turn of the century, some residential allotments near the railway lines and tramways that remained unoccupied during the 1890s economic depression became gradually developed. Demonstrating the enduring suburban expansion during the very early Edwardian-era, these transitional-period houses sometimes display Italianate-style features and forms, blended with new architectural trends of the early twentieth century. These examples are sometimes referred to as Italianate Survival style.*

*The Italianate style is a revival in the mid-nineteenth century of earlier Italian architectural forms and details, especially those from the time of the Renaissance, which were in themselves a revival and reappraisal of Greek and most importantly Roman architecture.*

*The Italianate style was also associated, but less commonly in Victoria and chiefly in the 1840s to 1860s but with lingering influence, with a revival of building forms of vernacular Italian rural buildings, particularly in their use of asymmetrical massing and towers producing a picturesque effect.*

*The Italianate style as applied to domestic architecture in Victoria favoured simple building forms, sometimes enlivened by bays and towers, with sheer wall surfaces in face brick (often bi-chrome or polychrome) or cement render generally incorporating quoining (often as surface decoration if not necessarily structural need).*

*Decoration in the Italianate style derived from Roman precedents and included elements from classical entablatures and architectural orders, including a hierarchy of architraves, friezes, and cornices with associated moulding, panels, and brackets, applied to eaves, parapets and chimneys.*

*Eclectic touches were often married to the Italianate style, including Romanesque, Gothic, or stilted segmental arch-headed fenestration, incongruous replication of masonry features in timber, and excessive ornament that characterised the Boom style of the late nineteenth century.*

*The Italianate style is well represented in the Heritage Overlay in Moonee Valley. Individually significant examples included detached villas (both symmetrical and asymmetrical in plan), terrace houses and mansions. Typically, they are set within a garden with a low front fence at the street frontage. Detailing ranges from modest to elaborate, typically including features from the era including cast-iron verandah friezes and posts and polychrome masonry to the front façade. The level of intactness of the Victorian-era Italianate villas in the City of Moonee Valley is moderate to very high. On the current Heritage Overlay, a few transitional-period villas are identified as Italianate Survival style (Context, 2017 Heritage Study, Vol. 2, 2021: p. 514-515).*



All photos sourced from Google streetview or heritage ALLIANCE, 2021

Tyneside, 31 Dickens Street, Moonee Ponds ca.1900 (HO516). The residence at 31 Dickens Street is characteristic of a late Victorian, Italianate Survival villa. The house comprises a simple, single-storey form comprising a front verandah stopping against an asymmetrically placed bay window. There is dichromatic brickwork and an unusual decorative scheme over the bay window in cream brick. The bull-nosed, corrugated iron, part verandah has a cast-iron frieze. The slate roof has metal ridge capping and brick chimneys with rendered corbelled tops.



House, 40 Maribyrnong Road, Moonee Ponds, ca.1903 (HO521). A large slate-roofed brick villa asymmetrical in form with projecting bays. The main roof is hipped and also incorporates a canted bay. The roof is clad in slate with metal ridge capping and has bracketed eaves. The three face-brick chimneys have strapped detailing to shafts, corbelling to chimney tops, and are topped by terracotta chimney pots; these the influence of the Queen Anne style. The return verandah has a corrugated iron roof cast iron brackets and frieze. The walls of the house are predominantly of brown brick, with red and cream polychrome highlights, notably three bands of stringcourses and headers to the principal windows. The windows to the canted bay are segmental arched double-hung sash windows and the front door has sidelights and highlights.



Houses, 59 and 61 Tennyson Street, Moonee Ponds (HO525), are a pair of Italianate villas, ca.1892. These two houses are examples of Italianate villas and demonstrate the ornate and asymmetrical form common to the style. They have dichromatic, tuckpointed brickwork, canted bay windows and return verandahs. The bay windows have segmental arches. The original roof of number 61 is slate with fish scale patterning and metal ridge capping.



26 Fletcher Street, Essendon, c.1905 (HO300) is a dichromatic Federation-era brick villa of Italianate Survival style. Asymmetrical in plan it has a hip roof clad in slate tiles with a projecting bay and there is a return verandah with a cast-iron frieze. The projecting bay has a pair of round-headed windows. There is another pair of double hung sashes in the main elevation beneath the verandah. Other original features include the paired eaves brackets and dichromatic brick chimneys. Some of the original materials have been replaced sympathetically.



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**Recommendation:**

That 17 Combermere Street, Aberfeldie, be included in the Heritage Overlay schedule.

**Schedule:**

External Paint Controls	No
Internal Alteration Controls	No
Tree Controls	No
Solar Energy Controls	Yes
Fences and Outbuildings	No
Prohibited Uses	No
Aboriginal Heritage Place	No